



FY 2017 JUDICIAL BRANCH OPERATING BUDGET

Background. The Judicial Branch Appropriations Act ([HF 2457](#)) appropriated \$181.8 million from the General Fund to the Judicial Branch for FY 2017. This is no change in funding compared to estimated FY 2016. Of this total, \$3.1 million was appropriated to the Jury and Witness Revolving Fund, and \$178.7 million was appropriated to the Judicial Branch for operational costs.

Due to the status quo appropriation, State Court Administrator, David Boyd, has stated that the Judicial Branch will be about \$5.4 million short of the amount needed to fully fund the Judicial Branch operations at their current level of service. Factors contributing to the anticipated budget shortfall include:

- \$966,896 increase for salary annualization for FY 2016.
- \$4.2 million increase for salary and benefit increases for contract covered and non-contract covered employees in FY 2017, along with anticipated increases in the cost of health insurance in December this year.
- \$300,000 reduction in federal funding for IV-D child support work performed by clerk of court offices due to efficiencies produced by full implementation of the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS).

Operating Budget. The Iowa Supreme Court recently approved the Judicial Branch operating budget for FY 2017. The FY 2017 budget approved by the Supreme Court includes a plan to balance the budget, despite a \$5.4 million predicted shortfall. This budget plan is subject to adjustments throughout FY 2017. The measures approved include:

- 1) **A hiring freeze for all vacancies in the Judicial Branch, with limited exceptions** – Currently, there are 70 staff vacancies throughout the entire Judicial Branch, equal to \$3.4 million of the current budget. By holding most of the positions unfilled, the Judicial Branch predicts it will have a combined vacancy factor savings in staff positions of \$3.2 million.
- 2) **Holding open judicial vacancies for an average of six months** – Judicial vacancies are anticipated to provide an additional \$834,000 in savings.
- 3) **Instituting a moratorium on the expansion of specialty courts** – In addition to the moratorium on expansion, any District with a special court must obtain approval from the Supreme Court before eliminating any of its specialty courts.
- 4) **Reductions in nonpersonnel line items** – The remaining \$1.4 million necessary to balance the budget will be generated by the following actions:
 - Reducing travel (in/out of state) by 10.0%.
 - Reducing office supplies and postage by 20.0%.
 - Reducing telephone services by 10.0%.
 - Shifting IT nonpersonnel costs to the Court Technology Fund.
 - Reducing furniture and non-IT equipment by 50.0%.
 - Reducing the education and training program by 10.0%.

Workload analysis. As a part of an effort to develop long term planning options, the court has asked the state court administrator to complete a workload analysis of all aspects of Judicial Branch operations. The process will begin this summer when the National Center for State Courts will be assisting the courts to update their weighted workload analysis for judges and magistrates as well as support staff. The work will be completed around the end of the calendar year and the results will be used to help guide future budget decisions.

Additional Information. Further detail regarding the budget is available on the Judicial Branch [website](#).

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